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3 April 1959

**MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR**

**SUBJECT: "Soviet and Other Reactions to Various Courses  
of Action in the Berlin Crisis"**

**BACKGROUND**

1. On 17 March the President approved a State-Defense recommendation that a State-Defense-CIA paper be prepared analyzing four alternative uses of force to maintain Allied access to Berlin. We have participated fully in the working group preparing this paper, which is presently scheduled to be considered by the Secretaries of State and Defense, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and yourself, together with Gordon Gray on Thursday, 9 April prior to submission to the President. A copy of this draft is attached.

2. The CIA portion of the above paper, covering estimated Bloc and Free World reactions to the four uses of force, is being prepared as SNIE 100-6-59. Since we elected to do this as coordinated intelligence community exercise the final CIA contribution will not be ready until approved by the USIB on Monday, April 6.

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SUBSTANCE

3. Two splits arose in representative discussion of the CIA draft:

a. The Air Force dissents from the estimate that the Soviets would use force to counter a ground attempt to reopen access to Berlin. (Page 8, paragraph 6). Its reasoning is that Western use of force would convince the Soviets that counter action would involve too great a risk of general war. This split is the same one as in the World Situation estimate and you are familiar with the Board's reasoning as to why the Air Force's position cannot be accepted.

b. The Army dissents from the estimate that the Soviets would not attack our escorting aircraft if we used them to escort transports to Berlin. The Army believes that the Soviets would use whatever force was necessary, in the air as on the ground, and for the same reasons.

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The Board believes that since the Soviets would be forced to fire first in this case they would appear before the world as the initiators of hostilities. Since ground access to Berlin would almost certainly have been blocked, the principle would be decided on the ground, and the Soviets would feel little need to block air access.

FOR THE BOARD OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES:

SHERMAN KENT  
Assistant Director  
National Estimates